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21 February 2013

Mr J Roberston
Headteacher
Great Orton Primary School
Great Orton
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA5 6NA

Dear Mr Roberston

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Great Orton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the new mathematics leader, teaching staff and three representatives of the Governing Body. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) also had a telephone conversation with the local authority school improvement partner, toured the school and spoke with a group of pupils. The school improvement plans and supporting documents were evaluated.

Context

Since the school was inspected, a new Reception and Year 1 classroom has been built, with access to an outdoor learning area.

Main findings

The school has suitable plans to address the areas identified as requiring improvement at the inspection in November 2012. The school improvement plan has been supplemented with a 'Rapid Improvement Plan' and a 'Development Plan for Governors'. The plans detail appropriate actions to rapidly improve teaching, increase the rate of pupils' progress in each class, improve provision in the Reception class and develop the leadership skills of middle leaders and governors. The plans have realistic timescales and clearly defined, quantifiable

success criteria. However, they are heavily reliant on the headteacher to both carry out the actions and to assess how successfully the weaknesses are being tackled. The plans do not currently indicate how and when governors and others will check that plans are progressing to time and having the intended impact on improving teaching and raising achievement.

Governors have taken the initiative to build their expertise and strengthen the Governing Body committees. They have undertaken a detailed audit of their skills and organised training to support further development. Governors have played an important part in improving the school environment. They are clear that they now need to focus on how well teachers are increasing the pace of teaching and quickening the rate of pupils' learning. Their role in monitoring is developing, for example through participation in pupil progress meetings.

The headteacher has worked alongside the three other teachers in the school, who are all recently qualified. This has provided teachers with a model of good teaching and has helped to develop their skills. The headteacher has established professional development plans for each member of staff. All staff have participated in training aimed at promoting a consistent approach to assessment and marking, and ensuring challenge for able, gifted and talented pupils. The most recent pupil progress check indicates that pupils are making more rapid progress in lessons. Subject leadership roles are being developed through effective links with nearby schools. This is helping teachers to learn from other professionals and share best practice.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- integrate action plans where there is overlap so that the timing of related actions is clear
- clarify the role of governors in monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of plans, indicating how and when this will take place.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has brokered support from nearby schools and a Local Leader of Education. This is proving helpful and enabling the recently qualified teachers to observe effective practice and develop their leadership skills. Local authority governor services are providing support and training for the Governing Body which is strengthening their skills. Local authority officers have also led professional development for staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.